

Able and Willing

Good morning Calvary Chapel, if I haven't gotten the opportunity to meet you yet, my name is Andrew. I am the high school youth pastor here at the church. I'm thankful to be here with you this morning, let's open up God's Word to us in Mark chapter one, we will start in verse 40. Let's pray...

Considered to be one of the most beloved pieces of Christian Literature, "The Touch of the Master's Hand" by Myra Brooks Welch, has stood the test of time. Since 1921, it continues to have an impact on new generations. It serves as a powerful metaphor for how God's love and grace can transform lives.

This grace of God, is what I believe God wants me to share with you today in Mark 1... allow me to read to the poem for you:

'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while to waste much time on the old violin,
But held it up with a smile; "What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"
"A dollar, a dollar; then two!"
"Only two? Two dollars, and who'll make it three?"
Three dollars, once; three dollars twice;
Going for three..." But no, from the room, far back,
A gray-haired man came forward and picked up the bow;
Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,
And tightening the loose strings, he played
A melody pure and sweet as caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer, with a voice that was quiet and low,
Said; "What am I bid for the old violin?"
And he held it up with the bow.
"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?"
Two thousand! And who'll make it three?"
Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice,
And going and gone," said he. The people cheered,
But some of them cried, "We do not quite understand
What changed its worth." Swift came the reply:
"The touch of a master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,
Much like the old violin,
A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine;
A game - and he travels on.
"He is going" once, and "going twice,
He's going and almost gone."

But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand
The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand.

In our scripture this morning we find a battered and scarred individual whose name we don't even know. Society has turned its' back on the man, and left him to collect dust and waste away. He has a condition, that has separated and devalued him. Others looked at him with disgust and disdain. The man in our text was hopeless, until he came into contact with the Master's hand. Jesus stretched out His hand to the man and touched Him, and spoiler alert, everything changed! The man was restored, cleansed, made new!

My prayer is that those of us here this morning, who are feeling battered and scarred, isolated, maybe even hopeless, that you will experience Jesus' outstretched hand on you this morning reminding you of His amazing grace!

So in verse 40 we begin, and we learn all we know of our man of the story, He is described here, "Now a leper came to Him" A LEPER. 2 simple words, a leper. Most of us will never see a leper. We only understand it from a distance. Leprosy was the most feared disease of the ancient world...

Today it is called Hansens disease. And only in the last 70+ has the disease been found curable through a mutli-drug therapy program taking nearly a year to rid a person of the bacteria causing leprosy...

Leprosy has a threefold effect on its inhabitants: physical, social, and psychological. There is a normal physical progression to the disease. One day he begins to feel tired for no apparent reason for a series weeks and months. Then his joints become painful on the daily. Now before all of our "WebMD Warriors" in the congregation start to self-diagnose leprosy, there is a bit more to it than that!

One day he would've noticed little red sores upon his body, that wouldn't go away... they would continue, and more would appear. The sores become white, shiny, and scaly. His skin would begin to thicken and produce lumps on his face, in his cheeks and lips, forehead, eyebrows would disappear completely. His hair would turn white and begin to fall out. Toenails and fingernails falling off...

His face would change dramatically over time, until his face was no longer that of a man, but more like a disfigured animal. The white sores would grow larger, would begin to become ulcers, open up and give off a terrible odor... You could know a leper was within 100 yards of you solely on the smell they produced...

Leprosy attacks the nervous system, and the extremities become the next problem. His hands feet, nose, ear, toes, are losing the sense of touch. He's walking now on feet that no longer can feel the ground below them.. Neuropathy sets in. He's walking along and dashes his foot into a sharp rock, metal, and he won't even know anything has happened to him til he looks down and he's missing a toe.

Lepers would wrap their hands and feet with rags to try and protect form them from banging up against something or from becoming to hot or cold... while he sleeps, the infestation of rats would come in and begin to eat away at the lepers toes and fingers unknowingly being eaten alive.

These injuries would often reoccur upon his body over and over again over the years, in the same places again and again, causing the bones to shorten, the tendons to break down, in his hands and feet making them less functional to the point where he is left with clubs and claws... Head to toe open and oozing sores...

The Respiratory system was later effected too, vocal chords would become ulcerated too, the leper is losing his voice, wheezing at every breath...

And ultimately all of these things would culminate on a day, after dealing with this disease for 10-20 years, the day of his death... To die of leprosy was essentially to rot to death...

It is horrific.

Dr. Luke's gospel tells us that this man in Mark 1 is full of leprosy. Head to toe, inside and out, in the advance stages of leprosy... Very quickly approaching death...

But it gets worse, for the leprosy effects the leper socially as well...

Since the disease was thought to be contagious and was incurable... lepers were forced to keep their distance from those who don't have leprosy... he could no longer go to gatherings, if he saw someone approaching him from 100 yards he'd have to shout UNCLEAN UNCLEAN!

No longer living in the city... Living only with the lepers outside in the leper colony. He could no longer touch a non-leper... including his wife, children, family, friends... Once diagnosed, he could never touch them again... HE would never kiss them, hug them, never once again... This disease puts him into total isolation.

And how about the social stigma that followed leprosy too... for the rest of his life, he ceased to be seen as a human being... there's no man behind those rags, that smell, what he is a leper! A dead man walking.!

IF they know he's a leper is that's all that matters! Nobody cares about what he once was, who his family was, what he used to for a living, all the society needed to know about him was that he was leper, and he needs to stay away from me!!

If you came near a leper, you would be breaking God's ceremonial laws. That which is ceremonially clean must remain ceremonially clean. God used leprosy as a striking example for sin and its effects upon us...

God says in Leviticus 13, to quarantine them, make sure they're not spreading disease, understand its a picture of what sin does to man... but the problem was many that day took what God said and added to it... We like to do that don't we? They took it a step further...

They thought two things about lepers that day: 1) you are the walking dead 2) you deserve it! The judgment of God must be upon you! In the Jewish mind, your leprosy was caused by your behavior/morality. Leprosy was the finger of god judgment of god on the person who has secret sin/ rebellion. That's what the Jews believed.

Can you get inside the mind of this man? Imagine the psychological impacts leprosy had on him! You've got this terminal illness, coupled with social isolation, and these two factors take an immense toll on his heart and mind, mentally and emotionally... he is desperate and hopeless....

He communicates all of this in verse 40, as it says the leper came to Him, imploring (begging) Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean."

This leper said some amazing words here, " YOU CAN MAKE ME CLEAN!" Wow! But we must remember, there is no cure for leprosy! NONE! No one was ever cured from leprosy! Everybody died! But He really believed that Jesus could heal Him. He had heard of the ministry of Jesus. This scene is taking place after Jesus had spent the previous night healing the multitudes in Capernaum. This leper got word. Hope sparks again in his heart.

And he comes to Jesus with absolute confidence in the power of Jesus. He knows that Jesus **can** heal him, BUT he is not sure that Jesus **WILL** heal him. Is Jesus willing to cleanse me?

A God who can heal even leprosy is useless if that God doesn't have compassion for the leper... This is what the leper doubted... He didn't doubt the greatness of God's strong right arm, but he questions the greatness of God's compassion...

You see the way this leper felt about himself here don't you? I am too filthy, I literally stink, I am a reject, I see your power Jesus but I'm just not sure you're willing to help those like me... This leper has fallen so deep into hopelessness, his identity is found in being UNCLEAN, he believes he is a horrible person just as the local bystanders make him feel when they avoid him and yell "STAY AWAY LEPER! Some even threw rocks at lepers to keep them away!"

God must hate me too, I'm not worthy enough to have His strength shown in my life... it is heartbreaking.

This morning I want to draw your attention to this single question...the question the leper asks. It is one of the single great questions of all mankind throughout history, all the way to this room this morning... I know God is able, but is He willing? Many believe God is almighty, He is real, but what they lack is confidence for God's concern for them. Is God willing to have anything to do with my messed up life of sin and disease...

And here Jesus lays that doubt to rest beautifully for that leprous man, and for all of mankind through history all the way to this this room this morning, and he tells the man, verse 41, *Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."* As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.

I am willing! I possess both Jesus says, the power to cleanse, and the willingness to cleanse... the verse says he was filled with compassion, the original says He was gripped with compassion. And out of that compassion, Jesus stretches out his hand and touches the leper! The touch of The Master's Hand was placed upon him... The first touch this man has had from a non-leper in 10-20 years...

And Jesus cleansed this man with the words, "I am willing be cleansed" . And immediately, not a progression, but instantaneously, the leper was restored to full health! He didn't have to go to counseling, rehab, a physical therapy, he was just instantly new!

People are amazed! This guy is healed instantly! That's the way it is with sin, when Jesus wills it and we come in faith for cleansing, and He cleanses us, it is done, HE does the work He sets us free immediately!

The scene must have been wild. His nose came back, tongue , lips fatten back out, sores disappearing, (EXAMPLE) fingers popping back on, He is made whole! He is separated from the disease and all of its effects... That which is impossible for man, it is possible for God! AND God is more than just able to cleanse, HE is WILLING!

Jesus is so clear in His answer to the leper and to you and me, in fact the whole bible proclaims this truth to us: He is a God who not only possesses great power, but also possesses an equally great heart for man. I am able and willing to save!

Keep reading with me, verse 43, *And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, 44 and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."* 45 *However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.*

Nice, naturally when God tells us to go and share to everyone around us about what Jesus has done in our lives WE DON'T, but then we God tells us hey go and tell no one, WE GO AND TELL EVERYONE! Geez haha sounds about right. Come on man.

But Jesus strictly warns him, imagine he's trying to get the guys attention, who is beyond excited to have all his toes and fingers and teeth back jumping for joy, Jesus is like hey bud are you listening to me !

This is important, make this journey to Jerusalem to the priests, don't tell anybody else, and go tell the priests what I have done in cleansing you and have them perform this ceremony with your offering. Remember lepers, didn't go to the doctor they went to the priest to be examined, and diagnosed.

Leviticus 13 describes this process of dealing/diagnosing a leper. But in Leviticus 14, we find the ceremony that Jesus is referring to here in Mark 1, the ceremony for the cleansing of a leper. And there is no record of chapter 14 of Leviticus EVER being used until now, because welp lepers were never cleansed before now!

If a man or woman was cleansed of their leprosy, the priest would go out to where the leper was outside the temple, and examine him and make sure that he had actually been cleansed of his leprosy...

Let me just read the procedure for you, Leviticus 14:4-7, **4 then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. 5 And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. 6 As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. 7 And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field**

Cool praise the LORD. UMM what?! What a weird sounding ceremony, kinda gory... but this is the law of God it is good, let's understand it, for there is an amazing picture to be seen here!

The priest would take an earthen vessel, two clean birds like doves, put in the bowl living water, running fresh water, take a piece of scarlet cloth, a piece of cedar wood, and a piece of hyssop.

HE would take the one bird, and kill the bird, and pour the blood of the bird into the living water in earthen bowl (kinda gross but just what you do) then he would take the hyssop, cedar wood, scarlet thread, and the second bird and were not totally sure how but some say they would take the living bird and hyssop, tie them to cedar board with the scarlet thread. And you've got this bird on a stick looking thing,

And you dip all of that into the bloody water... The blood applied. And the priest would proceed to shake the bloody bird on a stick on the leper 7 times sprinkling him, and then release the white dove covered in the blood of his kinsman bird, up into the air to fly away into the heavens...

I'm sure some of you may already be seeing this, but the entire ceremony of the cleansing of the leper, was an old testament picture of what Jesus would do coming into the world to cleanse us of our sin! And God put it in the hands of Moses to write for this very moment to be a sign to Caiaphas the high priest at the time of Jesus! Wow!

Break it down...

Jesus was killed in an earthen vessel (born into this world into a human body), and the scarlet thread speaking of his blood shed for us, remember on the cedar cross where he was nailed they lifted up the soaked sponge of water upon a hyssop branch, and the blood and water pouring out of His ribcage as the soldier pierced his side to check if He was dead...

And then the two birds, why? Because it's impossible for the good news that is found in Jesus Christ, to be symbolized in just one... The first bird, symbolizes Jesus' death in order to provide for cleansing of my sin, then the second bird symbolizing the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

The gospel for the sinner is not just that Jesus came and died on the cross for my sins, BUT ALSO on the 3rd day he rose from the grave, and showed his authority over death and hell and my sin!

And that leper would watch that blood covered dove fly up into heaven , his heart would soar into joyous freedom from leprosy... The clean sinner also now soars into joyous freedom from sin by Jesus Christ, being justified!

This is what Jesus has done for us in reaching out His hand and touching us. It is a cleansing of the leprosy you and I have called sin, and just as Jesus was willing to cleanse this man of his leprosy, He is just as willing to cleanse any man or woman of their sin.

Yes God is almighty and strong and able, but He is also a willing and compassionate, gracious Savior. We all need to hear this, whether you've walked with God for decades, or you have yet to decide to accept and follow Jesus...

Leprosy is a picture of sin! For all of us our sinners in need of cleansing! We've all been diseased with it since birth! If we don't address our sin by bringing it to the One who is both able and willing to cleanse us, we, like the leper, will slowly rot away in our sin until we die. Romans 6:23 says the wages of sin is death.

The leper's question, 'Are you willing?' is more common among us than we might admit. Many of us have a knowledge and understanding about the reality of God, His power, His might as Creator of the universe and Savior of the World... but I know there are many of us who like the leper doubt that God would be willing to use that power to save me personally...

Even us who have accepted Jesus can struggle with this doubt, just like those who have yet to accept Him. How does one come to that conclusion? How does even a struggling Christian, conclude that "well God is able to save me, but I'm not sure He is willing anymore".

Well just like leprosy separates the leper, sin also separates us from God. [Isaiah 59:2 - But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.](#)

For me, there was a time in my life after accepting Jesus and giving Him my life, that I began walking in sin. As I continued in sinful habits, I didn't realize how they were affecting my view of God and His ability to save me. Sin separated me from God! When I walked in habitual sin, I could no longer see that God was willing to save me. I could no longer see that great compassion and love of Jesus in my life.

Sure I knew that God is real, mighty, the creator, HE is able, and all powerful, and I believe what Jesus did on the cross and all of these things, but sin separated me, distorting my view of God's grace. I started to feel like the leper felt.

Are you really willing to clean me? I mean everyone around me, doesn't like me! Everyone around me is not as disgusting as I am. I would come to church and think "God is willing to save all those people, save all of my friends, because they don't look like they are struggling with the things that I'm struggling with".

I could come to church and put on this face and show that I'm a good christian young man, but they don't know what I'm doing at home when no one else is watching... They aren't struggling with addictions like I am. God is willing to save them, but not me...

My sin is just like leprosy! Leprosy as it continues, it desensitizes the body. That's the way it is with sin. The more you watch pornography, the more you do drugs, the more you act prideful, the more you nurture your selfishness, you create a spot on your soul that is desensitized, a spiritual neuropathy! And it become easier to sin again then, we rationalize, we become desensitized to the conviction of the Spirit.

We convince ourselves nobody knows, it's not harming anyone, it's only a small sore of leprous sin, but trust me it will spread and grow til your sin can't be hidden anymore. Be sure your sin will find you out.

And this sin causing separation, starts to cause doubt. And for me, I lost sight of who I actually was as a child of God! My sin just like leprosy, deformed me to the point that it altered my identity! I felt useless, like the old dusty violin in the poem. This is exactly the trap the devil wants to see us in. Sin separates, but man the enemy wants to isolate you in that feeling of separation. God isn't willing to help YOU!

How did I get out? How can you get out? Simple, verse 40, says the leper came to Jesus! Come to Him! Repent of your sins.! Jesus I know you have the power to change me but I'm not sure if you would want to do it anymore for me! I'm such a failure, I've sinned against you too many times, is it in your heart to cleanse me?

Jesus gripped with compassion says to you and me I am willing! The Master reaches out His hand to you, and restores completely! This is what He did with me. He can do the same for you brother or sister in christ. IF you've given your life to Jesus, and you're back to messing with your habits of sin, backsliding, come back to Him who will cleanse you if you sincerely repent. He wants to restore you and remind you His grace this morning.

And maybe you're here today, and like leprosy, your sin has begun to take a physical toil on you... started small, you could handle it, you could cover it up with a shirt, but now its taken over your whole life... its what you are from head to toe... and its driven to you a life of isolation... you're not seeking God... maybe your lifestyle is even driving you away from family even now, driving you away from society...

It has deformed you, and become your identity.. and like the leper maybe you are here this morning not doubting God's power, reality, might, to cleanse you, but you doubt his willingness to cleanse you, because of what your sin has turned you into...

I am happy to tell you, He is willing to cleanse you! He is able and He is willing and more than that even **He is eager to cleanse you of your sin!** He is ready to do that right now this morning.

2 Peter 3:9 says He is not wiling that any should perish but that all should to come everlasting life!

2 Corinthians 5:17 if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Praise the Lord for His amazing grace and His strong right arm!

If you have never accepted Jesus realize religion did nothing for this leper man, you need to do what he did and get to Jesus! And have Him touch you, and cleanse you, and restore you to usefulness, to new life! You don't have to clean yourself up before you get to Him either, Jesus does the work! Just come!

And if you are willing to trust in Jesus this morning, and say God I confess my sins to you, I have fallen short all of my life I am not perfect, and I believe your assessment of me, I believe my sin has separated me from you, from relationship with you...

But I also believe you love me so much that you sent your Son to die on that cross as the full payment for my sins, and I put the entirety of my trust in Him for the forgiveness of my sins, and I ask you now to come into my life by your holy spirit and use it for your purposes!

I turn from my old ways and give you my life entirely, and when a person will say that from their heart, to God, when you do that, the greatest miracle in human life occurs, when God almighty in the person of the holy spirit comes into that life and everything changes !

And all of that is there for the asking! Today your life may be battered and scarred, you may be afflicted with a spiritual leprosy of sin, and no one else wants to touch you, but you come to Jesus, and He wants to touch you, it's a cleansing touch, your life can be transformed, you can be forgiven, you can be restored. God is able, and He is also willing.

Let's pray...

There's only one thing that can remove the guilt of sin from a persons life, and that's the blood of Jesus Christ cleansing. The bible tells us the blood of Jesus cleanses a man... What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the Blood of Jesus! O precious is the flow, that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can for sin atone? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! Not of good that I have done! Nothing but the blood of Jesus!